16

A

# SERMON

Preached before the Right Honourable the

# LORD-MAYOR,

THE

# Court of ALDERMEN,

THE

# SHERIFFS,

AND THE

# GOVERNORS of the ſeveral Hoſpitals of the City of *London*,

AT THE

# Pariſh-Church of St. BRIDGET,

ON

TUESDAY in *Eaſter-Week*, 1739.

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By ROBERT BOLTON, LL. D. Dean of *CARLISLE.*

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*LONDON:*

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# *Perry*, Mayor.

*An especial Court, held on the Feast of the Apostles St.* Philip *and St.* James *(that is to say)* Tuesday *the 1st day of* May, 1739, *and in the Twelfth Year of the Reign of King* George the Second, *of* Great-Britain, &c.

IT is Ordered, That the Thanks of this Court be given to the Reverend Dr. *Bolton*, Dean of *Carlisle*, for his Sermon preached before this Court, and the Governors of the several Hospitals of this City, at the Parish-Church of St. *Bridget*, on *Tuesday* in *Easter-Week* last; and that he be desired to print the same.

MAN.

GALAT. VI. 10.

*As we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men.*

IN the following diſcourſe I ſhall conſider,

*Firſt*, THE general obligation to do good:

*Secondly*, THE particulars, in which we may do it.

To convince us, that man is not to live to himſelf, we need but reflect how frequent his calls are for the aſſiſtance of others. When he has received life, how little is in his power towards the

preſerving it? He *enters* the world helpleſs; and, for years, *continues* ſo: owes his ſupport to a fellow creature's care, and has only what another's kindneſs vouchſafes him. When now compleat in ſtature, and ripe in underſtanding, how contemptible appears his ſingle force? How few dangers can it avert? What ſcanty conveniencies does it afford? It can promiſe him ſecurity in no place, nor render life otherwiſe than a ſcene of toil and uneaſineſs. Would we enjoy ſafety, peace and repoſe, we muſt look for them in ſociety. From our mutual aſſiſtance ariſe our mutual benefits; the comforts of life we give and receive from each other. Nor is it poſſible, that there can be any ſtate or condition of life, in which we are diſcharged from the obligation to promote the intereſt of our fellow creatures. Whatever advantages of learning, wealth, honour, power, we may have over each other, yet ſtill remains it incumbent upon us to conſult the publick good, and uſe our utmoſt induſtry in advancing it. The letters of one are the effect of the pains of many: no ſcience receives its birth and perfection from a ſingle head: we cannot raiſe ourſelves to any of the heights of knowledge; and ought therefore to think we are concerned to make that of ſervice to men, which we arrive not at but through them.

IT is only by our intercourſe with each other that we get *wealth*, and that intercourſe alone makes *it* in any wiſe advantageouſly poſſeſſed. The diamond has no intrinſic worth; there is not any one convenience of life, to which its luſtre and hardneſs, in the leaſt, contribute. Gold and iron, conſidered in themſelves, the latter is by far the moſt valuable metal; ſerving to more and much better purpoſes, than the former. Our jewels and our coin obtain their price from compact; by a general conſent they are of uſe to particulars.

HONOUR, though the Prince may be its ſource, has all its privileges dependent on the people. The reſpect it finds, is not to be extorted; ſome muſt be ready to pay, ere any can receive it; and each has it in his own breaſt, whether he will ſhew or deny it.

A NATURAL right to bear rule over his fellow creatures, is no one's prerogative. God has made all men equal. The good of the governed is the deſign of government; and, that one is inveſted with a power over many, is not for his, but their convenience. Agreeably to what reaſon dictates, the holy ſcriptures inform us that

knowledge, authority, riches are ſo many talents, with which one is intruſted for another's benefit; that an account will be required of us how we have employed them; that a ſevere puniſhment awaits us, if we have not been as ready to promote our neighbour's eaſe, as to ſecure our own.

To attend barely the call of appetite, to conſult alone what may be convenient to ourſelves, is, indeed, to be a brute throughout. When we extend our views, when we regard every man as having an intereſt in us; and conclude that we are not ſent into the world, but to be a bleſſing to it; then is it we appear differing from the herd in nature, as well as ſhape, and expreſſing his likeneſs, who made all things, and whoſe care extends to all. Hence, when the philoſopher was asked, what brought us neareſt to the deity; his anſwer was, BENEFICENCE *and* TRUTH.

IF we look into the nature and conſtitution of man, we plainly find him deſigned a ſociable creature; intended for converſe *with*, and, conſequently, for the ſervice *of*, his kind. Many of the paſſions, which our Creator has implanted in us, reſpect ſociety, and appear beſtowed upon

us,

us, as members of it. Were our care to be confined to ourſelves; were we not to live with, and for others, nature had fruitleſsly put us under ſuch impulſes, had vainly formed us thus affected. Indeed, ſo manifeſt, ſo evident is our obligation to benefit our kind, that this is one of the very few truths no ſect has controverted. So clearly does nature itſelf teach this, that we find the perſuaſion thereof prevailing in the rudeſt, the moſt barbarous ages of the world. Something ſo noble did they eſteem it, for one to be of uſe to many, that whom they found thus, it was not enough for them to honour while living; when dead, they worſhipped him; with ſuch as had bleſſed the earth, they filled the heavens. Thus the elder PLINY. "From earlieſt ages it has been the cuſ-" tom to rank our benefactors among our deities." To the very ſame purpoſe is the obſervation of a judicious father---"Before the rights of different " nations were blended together, each paid divine " worſhip to its founder; to him who had gain'd " it victories, or to whom the diſcovery of ſome " or other art had been owing. Read, adds he, " the antient records, and you will agree with " me, that the Gods were originally ſuch, as " had done the braveſt actions, and taught the " uſefulleſt arts."

As divine worſhip was antiently paid to ſuch, as had been benefactors to mankind; ſo the firſt ſubject of poetry was their praiſe, who had made the publick happineſs their own; had lived for their country's benefit, or died in its defence. We find the moral writings of the heathen ſages preſſing, throughout, the duties of a ſocial life. There is no point, on which they more earneſtly inſiſt; none, concerning which they ſeem to entertain juſter and more generous ſentiments.

To give a remarkable inſtance or two. The doctrine of PYTHAGORAS was, that men are ſent into the world to ſerve it; that we then beſt diſcharge our duty to our fellow creatures, when we change perſons, make our caſe theirs, and their caſe our own. SOCRATES ever warmly inveighed againſt ſuch, as made private intereſt diſtinct from the common; and conſidered any thing, as profitable to themſelves, that was not ſo to their ſpecies. All things on earth were, according to the *Stoics*, created for the uſe of mankind, and man ſent into the world to ſerve man; to interchange good offices, and to promote the advantages of each other. Nothing is ſo frequently inculcated by TULLY, in what he has left us on the ſubject of Duty, as, that we are born

born for one another; that the good of each is that of all; that it is ſtriking at the root of ſociety, to allow this or that member capable of receiving any advantage, ſeparate from that of the whole. We are all members, ſays another of the antients, of one great body. We are kindred by nature, a principle of which it is, that to do hurt, is more afflicting, than to receive it. You muſt conſult the well-being of others, if you would your own. The true friend to himſelf, is he, that is a friend to all. Humanity admits no calamity as wholly another's, and treats the moſt extenſive good as its own greateſt. EPICURUS himſelf (baſe as his principles, in the main, were) is delivered down to us, as heartily recommending to his followers a love of mankind; as teaching the greateſt happineſs to be derived from friendſhip and mutual affection. Hence, though we find this ſect generally averſe to engaging in publick affairs, we read of many of it acting in private life with extraordinary tenderneſs and regard to their kind.

IF from ſuch as lived under the guidance of natural reaſon, we turn to thoſe, whom their Maker favoured with his revealed will; and, from the practice of the *Gentiles*, paſs to that of the *Jews*; we ſhall meet with freſh incitements to make the good of our fellow creatures our concern,

and

and communicate whatever bleſſings we have received. The corners of their fields, or a ſixtieth part of them, they left every year for the poor's uſe. Each third year, they gave the tenth of the product of their ground to the ſtranger, fatherleſs and widows. Their fields, vineyards and olive grounds, every ſeventh year, lay in common; the poor were then to reap the increaſe. None were permitted to take advantage of their brethren's neceſſity. Uſury was conſidered as oppreſſion, and ſtrictly forbidden. Every *ſeventh* year, all debts were remitted; and ſuch, whom indigence had made ſlaves, were then to be releaſed; nor barely releaſed, but to be diſmiſſed with a liberal recompence for their paſt labours. That a few might not wanton on the ruins of many, an alienation of lands was carefully guarded againſt; no one could enjoy thoſe of another, but for a certain term. The year of jubilee, the fiftieth year, reſtored all to their former poſſeſſors. It was with them even a crime, to paſs by the traveller lamenting his beaſt, unequal to its burthen, and not endeavour to aſſiſt him. And ſo far was an invaſion of the property of any from being countenanced among them, that even to covet the goods of another was ſtamped with infamy and reproach. To ſuch a height was brotherly

affection

affection carried under the law; ſuch a regard did it command each to pay to his neighbour's neceſſities.

As CHRIST became man to perfect man, to teach us what, in every relation, was becoming us; beneficence was what he principally recommended. Peace and good-will to men was the proper ſong, at his coming into the world; when, to promote peace and good-will among them, was ſo much his buſineſs in it. His miracles were always for the benefit of mankind. The good he did to earth was the proof that he came from heaven. The laſt miracle that he performed, before his crucifixion, was the cure of a wound, given one, who came to apprehend and bring him to the croſs: and when expiring, he prays, that they who had *occaſioned* his death, might be *benefited* by it.

THE doctrine we find him preaching is, that all religion conſiſts in two points, loving God, and loving each other. He aſſures his followers, that their endeavours to *benefit*, would *inflame*, the world; that their conſulting the happineſs of all, would be provoking all; and the fruit of their charitable labours be priſons, and torments, and death. Notwithſtanding which, they were to

teach every nation, to invite their fellow creatures to happineſs, how cruel ſoever their uſage might be from them, and to build a church, though their blood were its foundation. What the maſter adviſes, the diſciples faithfully execute. They viſit the remoteſt corners of the earth, ſhew how ſalvation may be found, by whomſoever ſought: they will contentedly be in ſome degree ſufferers, if they can preſerve thereby others from greater diſtreſs; and gladly embrace a temporary woe, to ſecure their fellow creatures from an eternal.

IF we conſult the admonitions they have bequeathed to lateſt ages, we ſhall find in them the ſame ſpirit of diſintereſtedneſs, benevolence and compaſſion, which appeared in all the expreſſions and actions of their maſter. Hence was it, that chriſtianity triumphed over all oppoſition, found proſelytes in every nation, and taught by a few, in appearance the refuſe of mankind, became the profeſſion of the wiſeſt, as well as greateſt part of it: as it was all kindneſs, love and tenderneſs, its charms were irreſiſtable. It was the beſt-natur'd religion the world ever heard of; no wonder therefore, that of all religions it had the beſt ſucceſs.

THAT for ſome centuries it has made ſo little pro-

progreſs, or rather ſo much declined, is chiefly owing to our regarding beneficence as ſo ſmall a part of it. Are we willing, that it ſhould overſpread the earth? our practice muſt evince this our firmeſt perſuaſion, that whatever worth there is in faith, or in hope; yet the greateſt, by far the greateſt, is in charity.

HAVING thus conſidered under what obligation we are to do good, proceed we,

*Secondly*, To enquire into the particulars, in which we may do it. But theſe being as numerous as the wants of our fellow creatures, were I to inſiſt upon each, it would carry me to a length, that your patience would by no means admit.

I SHALL confine myſelf to the conſideration of the good, that may be done by *inſtruction*, by *example*, and by our *fortune*. — The mind of man being the moſt worthy part of him, the beſt ſervice is, undoubtedly, what is done to that. All hopes of practiſing our duty muſt be founded on our having *learned* it: nor can it be wonder'd, that ſuch ſhould take a wrong path, who are ignorant of the right. Our principles are ever ſo far the rules of our actions, that errors in the one are ſure to produce faults in the other. Such

as know not how much it concerns them to be virtuous, rather than vitious, are certainly not likely to regard under which character they appear. Vice can no more be throughly deteſted by me, 'til appriſed of its *miſchievous* tendency, than virtue duly eſteemed, 'til I have been taught its *beneficial*. The life of the wild untutour'd part of our kind, is a life of ſenſe, a continual indulgence of their paſſions and appetites. Reaſoning, conſideration and reflection are neceſſary to engage us to act up to the dignity of our nature; and they have neceſſarily their riſe from the inſtruction we receive. The mind convinced that all things are under the direction of a providence, —that every action of man is open to the God that made him, — that rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate will be diſtributed, according as we behave in our preſent; when, I ſay, the mind of man is convinced of theſe truths, it of courſe inquires, how this ſupream of beings may be pleaſed, how his favour may be gained. It looks forward, engages us to deſpiſe the world we are to ſurvive; and to guard our innocence, as the only ſecurity of our happineſs.

THE preſervation of life is the firſt concern of all of us; this excites our particular care; to this our conſtant and moſt earneſt endeavours tend.

Yet

Yet ſuch is the force of inſtruction, that we find many brought to prefer their duty to their life; to chuſe death, rather than diſobedience. Nay even the ſevereſt torture, an ill more terrible than death itſelf, has to the mind, well ſeaſoned and acquainted with the extent of its duty, appeared not only *tolerable*, but even *deſirable*. Every mortal breathing doth, and muſt, purſue what to him carries the face of good; and all the evils, that are, or ever were, in the world, owe entirely their riſe to men's miſtakes in this point. Rectify the error; make it plain, that the *religious* are the only *happy*, and that our true ſatisfaction is from our virtue; produce ſuch apprehenſions; and the effect of them will ſoon appear in men's actions: what is firmly believed ſatisfactory, will be purſued as ſuch; and the happineſs that is imagined in virtue, be ſought from it.

HENCE is it, that the moſt civilized nations have encouraged *ſome* in them to engage in a due inſtruction of the reſt; to teach publickly the benefits accruing from a regular and well-order'd life, and direct to what is the true and proper good of mankind. We find among the very brutes, that there are none ſo ſavage, but a due management abates their fierceneſs, tames and makes gentle: many there are that admit of the

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uſefulleſt impreſſions, and are with eaſe form'd to be greatly ſerviceable to man. But if the nature of *beaſts* may be thus changed, thus improved; if creatures, endowed with *ſenſe* alone, may be raiſed to actions, which ſeem to diſplay tokens and evidence of reaſon; what ground have we to hope, that none of a kind, diſtinguiſhed by reaſon, can be proof againſt it; that none of this kind can be ſunk ſo low, but, if properly applied to, if ſeaſonably inſtructed, may be engaged in a courſe worthy the ſuperiority of their nature, and which the conſcience of every one muſt approve? There is nothing more certain, than that the material points of our duty carry with them their own recommendation: ſoon almoſt as propoſed, the moſt ignorant ſees their reaſonableneſs, and cannot but own his happineſs greatly concerned in their obſervance. And were they propoſed with all the advantages they admit of, it may ſeem probable, that no tempers could entirely withſtand them; that the very worſt diſpoſitions might be wrought upon, to make them in ſome ſort their care.

FROM the good, that may be done by *inſtruction*, proceed we, *ſecondly*, to that, which lies within the power of *example*. And example may be eſteemed full as much more powerful than inſtruction, as ſenſe is than reaſon. To know the

the true ſentiments of men, we obſerve rather their *deeds* than their *profeſſions*; nor will ſuppoſe them to ſpeak as they think, who ſpeak otherwiſe than they act. Whoever hears us exhorting to virtue, as the direct and only road to happineſs, will naturally inquire whether *we* take it; and conclude, ſince all deſire to be happy, that what we purſue, we apprehend likely to make us ſo. Where our whole endeavour is to pleaſe the deity; where we are continually engaged in commendable purſuits, and appear reſolved to part with any thing, rather than our integrity; it cannot be queſtioned what our perſuaſion is, it cannot be queſtioned whether we are convinced, that our intereſt is inſeparable from our duty.

PRECEPT carries ever with it ſo much of the air of ſuperiority, that it pleaſes our ears too little, to ſink deep into our minds. There is a ſort of vanity and conceit running through our whole kind, that makes us uneaſy, when regarded as erring or ignorant; ſuch none would be; and ſuch, therefore, none are willing to think themſelves. Hence, reproof and exhortation, how wiſely ſoever given, are generally bitter and diſtaſteful; but when we ſhew others their duty, by doing our own, as we hereby give inſtruction, without ſeeming

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ing to intend any, we inſenſibly win upon our obſervers; and ſeldom fail to influence them, while we appear, not ſolicitous what *they* are, but what *we* ought to be. Things ever before our eyes ſteal upon our affections, in ſpight of us. What is moſt frightful loſes its deformity, by a long acquaintance. Familiarity of courſe begets liking, and liking imitation. But if a bad example may bring us to what we moſt abhorr'd, ſtifle in us the voice of reaſon and conſcience, and efface every good impreſſion; it, certainly, cannot be out of the power of a good one, to lead us to the practice of what every man's reaſon tells him is fit to be performed; to engage our perſeverance in a ſtate, which carries with it its own recommendation; to keep alive in us that ſenſe of virtue, which is never without violence extinguiſhed.

WHAT TACITUS ſays of the antient *Germans*, that good cuſtoms were of more force among them, than good laws among others, is a teſtimony to the power of cuſtom throughout the world; to the almoſt irreſiſtable ſtrength, with which it uſually works upon men's ſhame and emulation. How monſtrous is vice in me, when in thoſe of the ſame paſſions, appetites and hopes with me, I ſee nothing but virtue? Where there are the ſame abilities, why ſhould there not

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be the ſame merit? Why ſhould I permit a ſuperiority, where nothing but my own ſupineneſs forbids an equality? Thus the generous part of us reaſon within ourſelves; and find not eaſe, 'til arrived at the height, where we ſee others plac'd; 'til become the perſons we applauded. It has been by ſeveral remarked, that the moſt eminently learned have flouriſhed about the ſame age; which obſervation will extend likewiſe to perſons of eminent integrity. There have been virtuous, as well as knowing *times*; and, in the force of example, we are to look for the reaſon of both. Strange muſt be the depravity, where no ſenſe remains of what is excellent; and when ſenſible thereof, we naturally warm at its ſight: we endeavour to become what we admire, and ſoon afford the incitement we received. What hinders them, who own virtue to be indeed lovely, from making it their conſtant purſuit, is, the difficulty they apprehend in attaining it: their paſſions oppoſe to their view a thouſand terrors, and make religion a yoke indeed. But example diſpels all theſe fears: it ſhews men what they *ought* to be, and what they *may* be. It repreſents virtue as eaſy, as it is neceſſary; and diſplays it, at once, alike amiable and practicable. Would we excel in any art, our firſt care is to provide ourſelves with the maſterly performances in it: theſe we ſtudy, and

have ever before us. Rules never gave excellence to any; from our pattern's worth we derive our own. Nor is it otherwiſe in the conduct, than in the arts of life; 'tis the pattern that forms us; converſing with the good we become ſuch; and conform to the rules of our duty, not by hearing them enumerated, but by ſeeing them exemplified.

THESE obſervations may ſuffice to convince us, what happy effects are to be hoped from a wiſe and orderly conduct, let who will be the perſon, that evidences it. But, as my proper hearers, on this occaſion, are the magiſtrates and principal perſons of this great city, it is fit I ſhould not be wholly ſilent, as to the extenſive advantages, that muſt accrue from the proofs they give of a ſenſe of duty directing their actions. Let me remark, therefore, that the higher we are placed in the world, the leſs our behaviour can eſcape the notice of it; that *then* our conduct is not only obſerved, but obſerved in order to be imitated. The bulk of mankind will not judge for themſelves,---will not be at the pains of reaſoning themſelves into the practice of their duty. They are only brought to it, by what they hear from, and remark in, thoſe they reſpect. There is a faſhion in manners, as much

much as there is in dreſs; and the governing part of a nation ſet it in both. Good examples, in high life, put vice out of countenance, awe the young and the modeſt into virtue, and are no trivial reſtraint even on the oldeſt and moſt hardened ſinner.

You ſee in armies the courage of the commander inſpiring the troops with an equal ardour; and men are the ſame in cities and in camps; the ſelf-ſame influence attends the ſuperiors in each. Power naturally engages reſpect; but, power, with all the dignity of virtue accompanying it, ſo wins on its beholders, that they readily receive almoſt any impreſſions, it is inclined to make. The populace, in the *Roman* poet, are got to the very height of rage and reſentment; yet no ſooner is the man, *virtute ac meritis conſpicuus*, ſeen accidentally approaching, but all is calm; a general ſilence enſues, each ſtands liſtening to what he will direct, and his counſels inſtantly quell the tumult. I will only add, that the good example of magiſtrates muſt be of a diſtinguiſhed efficacy; becauſe, the whole community find the advantage of *their* ſteady adherence to their duty, of *their* ſuffering no paſſion or corrupt inclination to divert them from it. Here, therefore, as the happy effects of vir-

tue are by ſuch numbers ſo ſenſibly experienced, ſo actually felt; one ſees not how it can fail of making numbers its admirers, of engaging many in its purſuit.

As we may thus benefit our neighbour by our *example*, we may, *thirdly*, by our *fortune* — of which, as a beaten ſubject, very briefly. This, tho' the loweſt way of ſerving him, is not the leaſt neceſſary. Life is a very heavy burthen, without the conveniencies of it; and as providence has not diſpenſed to all what may ſuffice to procure them, he, that needs, has a juſt claim on him, that aboundeth. The leaſt thought muſt convince us how unreaſonable it is, that one man ſhould indulge every wanton, extravagant paſſion, ſet no bounds to his deſires, while others are ſtrangers to all the comforts of being, know only wretchedneſs and diſtreſs, neither poſſeſſed of what is neceſſary to their ſupport, nor in a capacity to provide it.

NONE of us muſt regard it as from ourſelves, that we are not theſe miſerable creatures; and the aſſiſtance we ſhould expect, were we in their condition, we ſtand ſelf-condemned, if we afford not. It is in wealth, as in knowledge,--- the more of it we have, the more we are to account

count for. The reckoning is large for *five* talents, and ſome will be required for *one*. Whoever receives is commanded to give; and all muſt ſhew mercy according to what they have found. We can carry nothing hence; it therefore muſt be a very unwiſe part, not to employ rightly what we have here: and if but the hopes of future happineſs may be the purchaſe of our preſent ſtores, we certainly cannot make a better. Every wiſe man will think what he may do moſt for his own benefit; and, if things, in themſelves periſhing, may be made the means to obtain an endleſs ſatisfaction, it muſt be the exceſs of folly, to put them to any other uſe. The advantage that riches have, in furniſhing us an opportunity of being public bleſſings, is, really, ſuch, that I know not what we ſhould more earneſtly ſeek. This, as was before obſerved, is, in ſome ſort, to reſemble the Deity; and go hence, my brethren, with this important truth uppermoſt in your minds---that our only reaſonable hope of obtaining his favour, muſt be from the endeavour we have uſed, to tranſcribe his perfections. Make this, O God, the daily care of all of us, for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour.

*F I N I S.*